

Having Difficult Conversations

Leadership Insight

In the most recent [Human Capital Survey](#) results, ITA employees stated they desired the following:

- Frequent, substantive conversations on their performance, including what steps the employee can take to be rated at the next performance level (Be realistic with the employee).
- Recognition and differentiation in employee's performance
- Manage poor performers

How often do you recognize your employees for their contributions? How often do you have performance discussions with each of your employees? Of course, performance conversations are often more difficult for the manager than the employee. It is never easy to tell someone that their performance needs improvement but it is our role as a leader to have this conversation. In addition, employees desire and deserve to know how they can improve.

Here are a few tips to help you have these conversations:

- 1) **Plan ahead.** Know what you are going to say before the meeting. What is the problem(s)? What impact does this problem have on the organization and fellow employees? What is the solution? Schedule the meeting at a time and place that is convenient for you and the employee.
- 2) **State the facts.** This is not about the individual but it is about their performance outcomes. The objective of this discussion is to find resolution. Do *not* forget to provide positive feedback too.
- 3) **It's their turn.** Allow the other party to respond, remember to *not* interrupt.
- 4) **Reach agreement.** First, determine areas where both of you agree. Next, allow the employee to determine what they believe they can change to improve their performance.
- 5) **Action.** Reach agreement on what action to take and set a timeline for the next discussion. Remember, on-going discussion is essential.

Take Action

1. Set up 10 minute meetings *at least* quarterly with each of your employees to discuss their performance. Go ahead and schedule it for the entire year.
2. Recognize your staff for their contributions. It's free!
3. Provide immediate performance feedback so that employees can improve.

To learn about this and other leadership topics, please visit the [Tips on Leadership Best Practices](#).

We want to hear from you! Provide us with your best practices, e-mail us at ITABestPractice@mail.doc.gov.